The Mission of the Brahmo Samaj

OR

The Theistic Church

OF

Modern India

BY

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PREFACE

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Inquiries about the fundamental principles of Brahmoism often come to me. During my last residence on the hills, at Darjeeling, I received some such letters, which made me feel that a statement of those principles in a succinct form might be of some advantage to such enquirers; and I sat down to write the following pages.

I cannot say that I have replied to all the questions or answered all the objections; but I think I have dealt with the main ones, leaving the minor points for the discussion of individual thinkers.

The first edition of the book, hurriedly published during the period of the last anniversary festival of the Samaj, was so disfigured by printing mistakes that its circulation had to be stopped and this second edition is put forward in its stead.

CALCUTTA,
25th March, 1910.

SIVANATH SASTRI.

THE MISSION OF THE BRAHMO SAMAJ.

The Church Idea.

The mission of the Brahmo Samaj or the Theistic Church of India in the modern world is unique; and the work that it has undertaken to do is altogether new;—*viz.* to organise a system of religious culture, and to build up a Church on the basis of natural and universal Theism. Theism, nay even monotheism, is not at all new in the history of the world. It has existed from the earliest dawn of human civilization and of the awakening of religious consciousness in man, under different forms, and with different associations. In Judaism and its kindred faith Mahomedanism, it has existed in the monotheistic form, and has moulded the life and conduct of millions of men and women. But up to this time nowhere has religion manifested itself or has actively exerted its influence without the two well-known props of *special and miraculous revelation* and *infallible authority*. Even in Judaism and Mahomedanism, which have strenuously opposed the doctrine of incarnation, those two articles of faith figure most prominently. Their followers also believe that their

faith was miraculously revealed to Moses or Mahomet and the sayings of those great leaders are marked by infallibility.

Now there are many amongst modern thinkers who are of opinion that natural Theism, having no firmer basis than human thought, is quite insecure for the purpose of starting a system of effective religious culture, or for keeping up an active religious organisation. It is too open to the inroads of modern science and of modern speculation. The doctrine of a Supreme Being, endowed with wisdom and love, on which alone it can be lastingly founded, is, according to these thinkers, yet far from being established. Witness, say they, the amount of groping and finding, finding and groping, that is still going on amongst the advanced thinkers of the world! What a process of groping and finding, for instance, is implied in the agnosticism of a Herbert Spencer, the Neo-Vedantism of a Hegel or the "Power not ourselves" of an Arnold! That sort of vague conception, that nebulous substance of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which everything proceeds, is not enough for evoking those feelings of love and trust which form essential features of a religious faith. Just fancy the case of a man standing by the side of a machine with his pet dog by his side. To the heart of that man, is not his dog more useful than that machine? The dog can return a trustful look in reply

to the master's loving glances ; whereas that machine is *eternally silent*, and *eternally indifferent* as far as his affections are concerned. Listen to us, poor tempted and care-worn mortals, O ye philosophers, we want something that can strengthen us, comfort us, and soothe us, in the midst of our daily conflicts ; such has been the cry of humanity all along and such is its cry to-day. To this cry, say the above-mentioned thinkers, natural theism offers no definite message. To the thirsting soul it offers a leaky reservoir whence the water may run out any moment. All ancient religions of the world were safer, because they raised around their reservoirs strong walls of *special and miraculous revelation* and *infallible authority*.

It is this conviction, that natural theism offers an insufficient basis for a system of religious culture and for an active and successful religious organisation, that keeps away from the Theistic Church many earnest minds whose faith in the ancient creeds of the world has been shaken. I met many such men in England during my short stay there. In reply to my earnest pleadings against their indifference to the Theistic Church they always advanced as a reason, their grave doubt as to the possibility of effectively organising such a Church.

In the face of such doubts the Theistic Church of India has undertaken to organise itself as a spiritually

effective Body. It is for this reason that I have called its mission unique. But what is our reply to these objections? First, our reply is simple. Men must live according to their faith; they must abide by it, and they must preach it. They must try to propagate it if they truly believe that it leads to the good of man; and if they are wise, they should start social organisations for its effective propagation. It is no reasonable objection against such a course to say that there are views held by large classes or large masses of men against it. No faith, no doctrine, no view, has been preached in the world up to this time which was free from objections, and which did not evoke in many cases strong opposition. To the earnest believer such opposition has been the greater reason for preaching it consistently. Take the case of vegetarianism, for instance. No doctrine is open to more earnest, more combined and more persistent opposition than this. Yet none the less is it my duty, as a believer in that principle, to practise it in my life, and to preach it to others, for I believe it to be the proper principle of diet for man. Indeed I must be less a man in my own eyes, and in the eyes of others also, if, for fear of popular disfavour, I shrink from that duty.

How strongly does this reasoning apply in the case of those who believe in a Supreme Being, as the author of this Universe! Let a man once for all

decide what it is that he believes in. Herbert Spencer's capital E in describing his energy behind the Universe need not mislead him. Does he believe in a blind force, or an Infinite Being endowed with wisdom and love? If it be the former, the Theistic Church has no claim on him. But if it be the latter, I call upon him to join it and uphold its banner.

In passing, I may own that in enunciating such a thing as an Infinite Being endowed with wisdom and love, I render myself open to the charge of raising a great philosophical difficulty; for personality, if truly analyzed, means limitation and distinction; whereas infinitude, by its very nature, is undetermined and all-inclusive. To some thinkers, an Infinite Person may seem to be something like 'a golden cup of stone,' to use a familiar Bengali expression. But think deeply, and you will find that there is both unity and difference; room for both the infinite and the personal. The external world and the internal spirit of man are both *from* Him, *in* Him and *of* Him, manifestations of His supreme energy, wisdom and love, yet they are different—different not only from each other in their manifested selves, but also different from the Supreme in their manifested natures and proportions. The Supreme is *in* all, *includes* all, but transcends all. The relation is something like the one existing between the speaker and his

word. The word is ushered into existence by the will of the speaker and can be justly said to be *from* the speaker, *in* the speaker and *of* the speaker, yet it is not the speaker, but is only an infinitesimal manifestation of the energy of the speaker. Similarly we have been launched into life by the will of the Supreme and may be justly said to be *from* the Supreme, *in* the Supreme and *of* the Supreme, yet *not* the Supreme, being only infinitesimal manifestations of His energy. He pervades us, He includes us, He engulfs us, He upholds us. He is immanent in us, and in the world; yet transcends both and is thereby distinct *from* both. The conception of this *unity* in trinity and trinity in unity is a mystery that surpasses the powers of our limited minds. We can only say that we *are*, because He has brought us into being; and we are so different from the external world, because he has made us so.

This conception, it will be found, is vastly different from the current Christian idea of an anthropomorphic and extra-cosmic Being called God, residing in a certain place called Heaven, knowing the affairs of men by reason of His omniscience and ruling the world by reason of His almightiness. To us Hindus of the East, brought up under the influence of the *Upanishads* and of the *Gita*, such a conception is childish. To conceive an extra-cosmic Being is to give up His infinitude, from which our Eastern minds shrink in disgust.

Secondly, it is not simply from an inward conviction of truth that our adherence is due to the Theistic Church; but we believe that by the providence of a wise and merciful Being this Church has been brought into existence to furnish guidance to the people of this country and of the world at large during a period of crisis in the world's spiritual history. Everywhere old things are crumbling away; old superstitions are being found to be untenable; and men and women are groping to find some rational resting place for their souls. In this desperate struggle many, who think that such a thing as a rational faith is impossible, are running to what is known as *secularism*; whereas many others, turning away in utter indifference from faith, are giving themselves up to the curse of the prevailing spirit of modern civilization, namely an *insatiable greed for personal comfort.* The means and appliances for personal comfort and material aggrandisement are daily multiplying in all directions and the fascinations of pleasure are within the reach of every rank of society; carried away by them, men and women are drowning all considerations of spirituality in a mad pursuit of pleasure.

Turning to India, we find that this country also is passing through a crisis. Its old religions are losing their hold on its people. The light of the new education has had an unsettling effect on thousands of minds. The old institutions of the country are

falling into disuse for want of popular support. Whilst a vast number of the educated men have practically begun to *live without God in the world*, the masses are being left without spiritual guidance on account of the disuse of the old methods of instruction. The children of educated men are growing up without religious instruction in their schools and colleges, and without religious teaching in their homes. With the slackening of religious convictions and the decay of religious instruction, the doors of society are being thrown open to many new and Western vices. It is, indeed, at such times that the saving energy of the Supreme Being intervenes for purposes of national protection. There is a passage in the *Gita* where Krishna, who is represented as the Divine Being, is made to say—"Oh Arjuna, whenever there is a decline of the religious spirit amongst a people and there is consequent growth of impiety and sin, I do re-create myself, *i.e.*, I do re-create my saving energy." We do believe the time for the re-creation of His saving energy has come; and the Supreme Being is using the Theistic Church as a new blow-pipe, like the one in a goldsmith's hand, to strengthen and divert the spiritual energies of the race into new directions. In joining it, we fulfill His purpose and co-operate with Him in His great work.

It may also be added that the Theistic Church of India is not merely a system of new philo-

sophy, destined to engage the attention of a few advanced minds for sometime and then disappear in history, such as was the case with the stoicism of ancient Greece and Rome. Zeno and Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and Seneca had views, justly regarded as quite advanced in comparison with the prevailing popular ideas of their times. Socrates and Plato were also men of advanced notions about religion in comparison with the popular beliefs of their times. But none of these great thinkers ever aspired to give a formal and lasting shape to their convictions or to organise themselves into something like a Church. Their philosophy was meant for a few advanced thinkers, it lived as such for a time, and disappeared in course of the evolution of human society. Modern theism is not such. It is organising itself into a Church or community of fellow-believers, with definite ideas and courses of action. Such a process is a natural one in matters of religious thought and life. As a living seed falling into the ground at once proceeds to gather round itself a crust of earth as a sort of protection against the wear and tear of conflicting natural forces, and to allow itself time for development, so by Divine ordination, a re-created saving energy, coming into operation in human society, gathers round itself a number of sympathetic souls who form something like a crust round it, and help it to carry out its object.

Thus is the formation of a Church natural and universal.

The advantages of the formation of a spiritual brotherhood will be manifest from a passage of the *Gita* where it is said :—"To all such, whose minds and hearts are fixed upon me, and whose joy it is to spiritually enlighten each other by speaking of me, and who are permanently united with me in loving communion, I give that right understanding by which they attain to me." Thus the idea of a spiritual brotherhood was early developed in ancient India, and was carried into practice by many of the reforming sects. The strength it gives to individual believers in upholding the banner of a new faith, and in fighting the good fight, and also the control that it exercises over their life and conduct, are invaluable. Hence we look upon the formation of a church as a part of Divine ordination.

Specially is this Divine ordination manifest in the case of the Theistic Church of India, which has a great and glorious mission as far as this country is concerned,—namely to fuse in a bond of spiritual union the conflicting claims of Hinduism, Mahomedanism and Christianity by laying insistence on their universal aspects; for certainly that was the grand ideal before the mind of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj. Reformers like Nanak, Kabir and Chaitanya aspired to fuse toge-

ther Hinduism and Mahomedanism, the two conflicting faiths with which they came in contact. But Ram Mohun Roy went further. The study of the three religions, Hinduism, Mahomedanism and Christianity, convinced him that there was a common element that unites them all, and he was also convinced that a universal Theistic Church could be organised on those common lines; and the formation of the Brahmo Samaj was a result of that conviction, though in giving his idea a shape, as far as his country and his people were concerned, he organised the new Church on national lines. His broad outlook was not only characteristic of his great mind and towering genius, but also of the times that were dawning upon re-awakened India. That mission of the Theistic Church is still before it, and will be surely realized in the distant future. So in joining it we take part in the development of a Divine purpose. Universal theism, as opposed to the narrow and sectarian creeds of mankind, is daily becoming more and more prominent in the thoughts of all religious thinkers, and it may be fairly hoped that the day is not distant when its claims will be universally acknowledged by all sectarian faiths.

Theism Defined.

Now let us describe the exact nature of the faith of the Theistic Church. Its faith is natural and universal Theism and not the Deism that was

prevalent in the Western World during the latter half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century. Nor is it that poor and helpless faith, known to modern philosophy, which represents the Supreme Being only as the first link of a long chain of causation, as if he has, once for all, surrendered the government of the world to blind forces, and to the silent but steady operation of natural laws working through a process of evolution no longer needing his personal guidance. I may remark in passing that modern science has resolved these so-called forces of Nature into one force manifested in different forms. Modern science has borne testimony to the following words of the *Upanishads*—"He is alone and formless, but has assumed many forms in the garb of many forces, for different purposes. He alone pervades the universe in its beginning, as well as in its end; He alone is the object of worship; may He guide us to right understanding"! The ultimate force of the universe in one; and that force is spiritual; for the spiritual alone is real, and has the power of originating and sustaining energy. Nowhere in the physical universe, as discovered up to this time, is there any fountain for originating new energy. Throughout the material universe there are only conservation and redistribution of energy. As in building a large house in a large city, man only uses stones that were in the quarries, wood that

was in the forest, iron that was in the mines, creating nothing new, using as agencies only *transplantation* and *transformation*, so in building up the physical universe Nature has only transformed and redistributed an original stock of energy. That is the conclusion of modern science as far as it has been established yet. But it is a mistake to transfer these laws of conservation and redistribution to the domain of the spirit. The error will be discovered by the consideration of the following points:

First, in the law of causation in the physical universe, we discover that the effect is only cause in another form, bearing all the former's characteristics, and preserving the former's proportions. Vapour, for instance, is produced by heat and water. The vapour cannot have characteristics unknown to heat and water, or to any element intermixed during the process of evolution, nor can it exceed the proportions of its original causes. It is only energy transformed and redistributed. Can we say the same thing with regard to spiritual phenomena? To take historical examples, was the energy that displayed itself in Buddha, the conqueror of Mara and the originator of a world-wide movement, the same that resided in the unconverted and pleasure-loving prince of Kapilavastu? Were these manifestations like water and vapour, similar in their characteristics and their proportions? Christ addressed both Peter and

Pilate. Peter left his all and followed the Master; whereas the jesting Pilate turned away from him in utter contempt. Mark also how the same causes differently affect the spiritual lives of different individuals. There were hopeless misery and decline of religion in the land for the observation of hundreds of men who pursued their daily avocations, but they maddened a Nanak and a Kabir, and sent them out as mendicants and preachers. The abuses of the Church were visible to thousands of individuals, and were perhaps decried by hundreds of them before Luther, but they became positive gall and poison to the latter and induced him to make the daring plunge. It is not safe, I say, to apply the water and vapour theory to human actions. I do not mean to say there is no law in the department of the spirit, but only that it is not the same as obtains in the physical world. You may call it *the law of affinity*, or *the law of love*, or *the law of prayer*. As the sap of the tree coming from beneath calls to its aid the light and air from above, so the deep longing of the human soul calls to its aid the in-rushing impulse of the Supreme Spirit. The soul's domain is the region of freedom and it is a mistake to apply to it the blind law of causation that we observe in the physical world. It is such application that has led men into many theological errors. It was such an application that led the great Buddha to believe in an un-ending chain of *Karma*.

and that has led many modern thinkers to invent the theory of necessarianism.

There is much truth in the following observations of Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore, the second great leader of the Brahmo Samaj—"The Supreme Being has endowed the human soul with resemblance to himself. He has bound up the physical world with natural laws, but has ordained for the human soul spiritual laws. In these laws there is no compulsion, but there is freedom. As far as man has a physical body, he is subject to his carnal nature and to physical laws. As far as he depends on physical things, he is fit to be regarded as one of those *things*; but as far as he exercises his freedom, he is entitled to be regarded as a person, *i.e.* a rational being.

"In Nature alone we observe the operation of a law of causation without a beginning or an end. In Nature there is no governing intelligence, no independent power; she works like a blind agency, and fulfills the Divine ideal without knowing. * * The Supreme Being, by endowing man with powers beyond and above Nature, has drawn him closer to himself."

The Theistic Church, then, believes in Theism, or the doctrine of a Supreme Being endowed with wisdom and love, in the freedom of the human soul, and in the law of love and prayer. The Supreme Being has so constituted the soul of man, and has so endowed it with spiritual instincts, that it naturally tends to mingle

with Him in loving communion as the river runs to mingle with the sea. The Bhágavat defines loving communion, as "that incessant flowing of the soul into the Oversoul, as flows the Ganges into the sea." In Him is the full satisfaction of our spirit. To know Him as truth is the greatest joy to its knowledge, to love him as the supremely loveable is the highest satisfaction of its love, and to exercise the active powers in obedience to His guidence is the highest fulfilment of its aim in life. Accordingly, it will be seen that loving communion with the Supreme is the second great point in that natural and universal Theism which the Theistic Church of India has adopted for itself. It is natural in as much as it does not depend upon special and miraculous revelation. There is no miracle in Nature, neither is there any miracle in the world of spirit. In one sense Nature itself is the miracle of miracles. We have lost the sense of it, because we have grown familiar with its processes. There is an old Sanskrit couplet containing a benediction in the following terms,—"May He shower His blessings on you, He, Who has covered the ducks with white feathers, Who covers the parrots with plumage of lovely green, and Who has so beautifully decked the peacock with such a variety of colours." I know the utterance of this benediction has often excited smiles in the listeners. But let us reflect. Is there anything more wonderful than the fact that

these poor little birds, so useful to the creation, and such a source of joy and refreshment to us, but so utterly helpless as regards their covering, should be so clothed with garbs of different quality in different seasons, that before the approach of winter, before they know that a change of weather was coming, they should be provided with thick and warm clothing to suit that change? Or take that well-known passage of the Bible, where Jesus says:— "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them: are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." Indeed Nature in her manifold processes is a living miracle. But beyond that we do not believe in any miracle, either in the domain of Nature or in the domain of spirit, which is achieved by the contravention of natural laws, or which is peculiar to one and not open to all. Even the soul's freedom, so unlike natural laws, moves according to its own laws and attains its objects.

These spiritual laws also are marked by uniformity and universality. Certainly there is revelation. As heat in any form is a revelation of the sun, and has

its source in the sun, so spiritual life in any form, whether garbed under the misleading cover of the Pantheism of the East or under the equally misleading cover of the Anthropomorphism of the West, is a revelation from the Supreme Being. There has been groping and finding for eternal truth in all lands and in all ages; and human search under certain conditions has been blessed by such revelation. The burning love of man, the earnest search, the utter self-forgetfulness, the unflinching fidelity to truth, the great courage in holding up the new light before the world, that characterised the great masters like Buddha, or Jesus, or Mahomet, also characterised, to some extent, all the second class teachers like Nanak or Kabir or Chaitanya or Tukaram or John Wesley or the founder of Quakerism; otherwise they could not have spoken to the hearts of men. They succeeded, because they spoke as man never spoke before; and this singularity was due to the inspiration of the Supreme. So there is a point of universality in Divine revelation: a fact very forcibly illustrated in modern times by the study of the religious scriptures of different races. The study of a series like the "Sacred Books of the East," for instance, has convinced even the narrowest and most sectarian minds of the West, that there has been no monopoly in divine truth for any race. The same truths that once formed the precious possessions of certain so-

called favoured races, are now found to be treasured up in the sacred writings of others. In ancient times, when there was so much tribal jealousy in the world, men were loth to concede any good thing to tribes other than their own. Accordingly, conflicting expressions like Hindus and Mlechchhas, Greeks and Barbarians, Jews and Gentiles, were framed and used by the nations to mark out their tribal prejudices. Mahomedanism, which received its original impetus from peculiarly narrow and sectarian Judaism, also invented the words Moslem and Kafir to inaugurate a career of bitter persecution, murder and bloodshed. Hinduism has a better history in that respect; for it has afforded room within itself to all shades of opinion. It has included Buddha among its own incarnations, and has honoured Kapila, a violently atheistic philosopher, with recognition and distinction.

The Universal and the Local in Religion.

To return to our subject. The discovery of the universality of Divine revelation has brought into operation a new spirit in the modern world. It is changing the temper of religious thinkers. First, the old spirit of sectarianism which took pleasure in dividing and subdividing men into conflicting sects, is receiving a check. In its place we find, in Christendom, a longing for union, where such union is *possible* without doing great violence to men's convictions. All sects,

which so long stood apart from each other, under the conviction that each one was the favoured of God, are now eager for discovering the common lines on which they may combine and strive together for the good of man. The movement is not confined to the Christian sects alone; but there is a disposition to shake the right hand of fellowship amongst other conflicting sects also. The Chicago Congress of Religions was an instance in point.

Secondly, men's eyes are turning, as they never did before, to the distinction between the universal and the national or local, in popular religions. We cannot deny that there is such a distinction in all religions. Why in religions alone, there is such a distinction in all human institutions:—nay in human nature itself. If we examine human nature, we shall find that there are certain traits in which races of men, whether civilized or barbarous, resemble each other. The barbarous man as well as the civilized one works for the woman he loves; the Hottentot or the Zulu woman, like the refined English lady, loves her children and takes care of them; the naked Sonthal, like the refined English gentleman, feels truthfulness to be better than falsehood; the ignorant Negro, like the citizen of Europe, is grateful to his benefactor. There are certain moral and spiritual endowments in which all men agree. But these moral and spiritual instincts undergo change by education, and assume

different local aspects amongst different races. In the man-centred homes of Hindu joint-families, for instance, the relationship between husband and wife is not quite the same as is to be found in a woman-centred English home. The Sonthal mother does not take care of her baby exactly in the same fashion in which an English mother does. The manner may be different, but the thing is the same in both places.

Similarly, there is difference between the universal and the local in religion. Religion or man's attitude towards the Infinite and Eternal can be viewed in many aspects. Some may regard Him from the standpoint of the knowing mind and may feel Him to be the *Supreme Truth*; others who view Him from the side of the emotions may regard Him as the *Supremely Loveable;* whereas a third class may view Him, as the *Supreme Regulator of human conduct.* Thus the Supreme Reality may reveal Himself to some minds as an abode of peace, to some as a benign master, to others as a friend, to some as a loving father, whilst perhaps to others, He may reveal Himself as a loving consort of the soul. It was thus that He was revealed as the Reign of Law and an abode of peace to the great Buddha, as the Supreme Lord to Moses and Mahomet, as a friend to Hafez, as a loving father to Jesus, as the fond lover to Chaitanya and Madame Guyon. Different men approached Him from different standpoints and were differently enlightened. There is an element of

truth in each point of view as we can plainly see; and the error of sectarianism lay in conceiving its own point of view as the only true one, and in contemptuously disregarding, and at times carrying on mortal warfare with all others. There was one mistake more. Amongst the sects, according to their traditional inheritance and local environments, different systems of belief and practice were developed in course of time and became associated with their idea of religion. These beliefs and practices, though in many cases purely local and national, assumed in the eyes of their followers all the importance of universal principles, and were accepted as the effects of the Supreme Being's special and miraculous revelation. It was under that conviction that endless wars were carried on amongst the sects. The bloody history of the Inquisition of European Christendom teems with such cases, where all possible means of torture that human ingenuity could invent were used, and men and women were put to death for no other crime than disbelieving in the secondary articles of faith, which were raised for the time being into principles of primary importance. Bruno, for instance, a pious and God fearing man, was burnt alive at Rome for disbelieving in the divinity of Jesus. In India, too, amongst the conflicting sects of Hindus, who were, as I have said before, more liberal than other sects, many bloody battles have been fought for difference of opinion with regard to such

minor and trivial points as using a particular form of beads or bearing on the forehead particular forms of marks.

Time has come at last for discriminating between the universal and the local or national in religion and also for accentuating its universal aspects more than its local differences. Researches into the domain of religion, from the standpoints of philosophy and science, have clearly traced the lines of natural and universal religion, and thoughtful men, even amongst the preachers of religion, have begun to lay greater emphasis on those universal aspects than on the secondary points. Mr. Campbell, of the City Temple of London, with his New Theology, is an instance in point. Not that I support all points of his theology; nor do I mourn less than any lover of liberal religion for the sectarian prejudice with which it has been visited, but it is a characteristic movement, very forcibly showing the tendencies of modern religious thought. The time is not very far when even sectarian Christianity will shake off its narrow sectarianism, and will strive for natural and universal Theism, which will be universal in its principles, but local and national in its modes of spiritual culture and of propagation, in its domestic and social ceremonies, in its acts of philanthropy, and also in its appreciation of different aspects of spiritual life and teachings.

It is also noteworthy that liberal movements

tending in the direction of the establishment of universal Theism are visible in other faiths also. Babism, for instance, which seeks to instal natural and universal Theism, like the Brahmo Samaj, has made its appearance in Persia, and has achieved considerable success in spite of bitter persecution. Taking into consideration the great social and moral upheaval now taking place in the Mahomedan countries of the West, we may safely prophesy that the modern spirit, which is for progress, and for the enfranchisement of the human mind, will not fail to affect the proverbially sect-ridden minds of the followers of the Arabian prophet, and that even Islam will shake off its sectarianism and march towards the coming universal religion of mankind. They, too, will find themselves established in a faith which will be universal in its principles but local and national in its secondary aspects.

Not only that, the principles of natural and universal Theism being the same, the special preferences or reverences of different communities will also be different. Men and women brought up under the traditional influences of love and reverence for Jesus will naturally cling round his name and draw their spiritual inspiration from his life and teachings. They will maintain and foster those traits of spiritual life that have been traditionally developed amongst them. Thus Western Theism will perhaps remain *practical*

while our Theism in India will perhaps be characterized by *mysticism*. We shall have our preferences also. We shall still continue to bow at the feet of our ancient *Rishis* and our sages,—our Nanak, our Kabir, our Chaitanya, our Tukaram and so forth. Briefly speaking, we, mild, contemplative and meditative Hindus of India, living in a mild and equable climate, which does not call out our minds to external events, will perhaps still continue to be contemplative and see the Supreme as the Soul of our souls; whereas the nations of Western Christendom, who live in the midst of climatic changes, constantly calling out their minds to changes of weather, and to political struggles, will still persist in seeing the Supreme in history; whilst perhaps the light-hearted races inhabiting such regions as Greece and Italy will take pleasure in viewing him in the beauty of Nature. Thus the modes of expression of the piety of different races will also be different, whilst their fundamental truth will be the same: *viz.*, natural and universal Theism.

Let me put briefly and in a concise form my ideal of the future religious life of mankind. Loving communion with the Supreme Being will be the guiding principle, in which all sects, all parties, all communities of religious believers will unite, all other things being held to be national, local, traditional and secondary. Individuals also will have as much variety in their religious ideas, and their local, traditional and

personal preference as their mental and spiritual constitutions vary. Some will prefer Jesus as the prince of prophets; some will accord that distinction to Buddha; whilst others will honor other saints of humanity. Sects will also have their special preferences and their traditional inheritances; some will sit at the feet of the Rishis, others at those of the Hebrew Prophets, whilst a vast number will sit at those of the saints of Christendom. Religious bodies will also differ in their modes of church organisation, their social usages, their means of spiritual culture, their modes of propagation and active ministry, their rites of private and public service, and in their domestic and social ceremonies; but they will agree in the main priciples of universal religion,—namely, in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, in the freedom of the human soul, in love and reverence for the great and the good of all races, in the final triumph of righteousness, in the purity and elevation of domestic and social life as a stepping-stone to man's spiritual and social progress, in the love and service of man as the best way of serving the Supreme Being. Thus there will be sects, but no *sectarianism*,—a prospect seeming to be more fanciful than actually probable to many who are inured in the present evils of sectarianism. But there is no inherent improbability in the conception. As there can be conjugal love without jealousy, so there can be love of one's

sect or party without hatred of others. As jealousy is a disease of conjugal love, which however is found in some natures, but is dispelled by better education and improved moral culture, so the taint of sectarianism, though still lingering in some narrow minds, will be largely remedied by improved spiritual culture enforced by the teachings of universal religion.

Thus I hope I have explained with sufficient clearness my idea of the future faith of spiritually enlightened mankind. Of course the path of progress of this faith is full of difficulties. A wise Providence has made man both *conservative* and *progressive* at the same time. We cling to the past with wonderful tenacity; for otherwise a good thing once revealed by the Supreme could not continue to bless us long; yet we cannot shut our eyes altogether to the present and the future; for otherwise our progress would be stopped. Providence means both; so he has endowed our nature with *reverence* on the one hand and love of truth and a desire for progress on the other. As the result of the combination of the two, the progress of humanity on the whole has been slow; and we need not mourn over the fact or ascribe it to the essential wickedness of the human mind. Of course human progress lies in the judicial combination of both. The evil springs from the over-accentuation of the one to the neglect of the other. A race, for instance, may be over-conservative like the Chinese or the

Hindus of India, or it may be go-ahead like the modern Americans, who have a mixed population and a short history behind them, and whose country is accordingly the home for all new experiments.

Individually, also, new ideas may have greater fascination for some natures than for others; whilst some natures are so wedded to the past, that it is almost impossible to move them. Under the joint operation of these two forces, society, in the long run, moves on a resultant line as it were. Of course it is the duty of each man, as a moral being, to stick to what he considers to be the truth, regardless of the consequences of such a course.

So it is certain that the progress of mankind towards this natural and universal Theism will be necessarily slow. Men will not easily persuade themselves to think the local and national elements of their faith as only secondary in comparison with its universal aspects. They will fight on, as the attitude of the Orthodox Christian Churches towards Mr. Campbell's movement plainly proves, or as the attitude of the educated Indians towards the Brahmo Samaj clearly manifests. They will fight on, till one after another their articles of faith get themselves modified and they are ultimately landed, without their knowing it perhaps, in natural and universal Theism.

Loving Communion with the Supreme the essence of spiritual life.

In the meantime there will be many social experiments, many haltings half-way, in the fond but foolish belief that religion, at least effective religion, can exist without a firm belief in, and active living and loving communion with, the Supreme. Now it will be in the form of a revival of Vedantism, then in another, but be sure humanity shall have no rest, no spiritual repose, no strengthening joy, no sweetening love, unless there be soul-communion with this Infinite and Eternal Reality. As the rivers, to use a simile of the Bhagavat already quoted, have their fruition and perfection in mingling with the ocean, so the human soul has its fruition and perfection in loving communion with the Supreme. Accordingly, the Theistic Church of India lays all the insistence that is possible with its limited energy on living and loving communion with the Supreme as the chief spiritual aim of its members. It is not simply a theological body delighting in clever expositions of nice points of liberal religion; nor is it merely a reformatory organisation, seeking to reform the many social abuses by which our dear country is afflicted. Of course social reform forms an important part of the programme of its work; but that is only its secondary aim, a part of the conscientious and consistent operation of its principles;

but its main effort is directed towards enabling men and women to raise themselves to the contemplation of, and loving communion with, the Supreme. It is *loving* communion, mind you, not simply that rapt abstraction from things that are transient to meditate on an ever-present and all-pervading force or energy. That is also necessary. We require at times to raise ourselves above the disturbing sensations and thoughts of the hour, to withdraw ourselves from the external turmoils, as it were, and feel the loneliness of the spirit, when things of form and things of life, dissolve, as it were, from our minds and we mingle in oneness with the all-including Existence that then becomes discernable as a tranquil and boundless Ocean. But that is not all; our souls not only long for the realization of this boundless Sea, but they also long for a vision that has a message for all their spiritual endowments; for their love, for instance, for their spiritual instincts, for their sense of beauty, and for their ardour for social service. The Supreme Reality, realized as Infinite Wisdom and Love, can alone fulfill that purpose.

Beguile not yourself, therefore, O man, with halfway stages towards that goal. Brush away with a broom-stick all talks about a Supreme Essence, an Infinite and Eternal yet Unknowable Energy and so forth; wake up to the conviction that this universe is not yours; that you have no hand in its majestic

process of evolution; that you are a part, a small part, an infinitesimal part of it, smaller than a grain of dust on the side of a hill, yet that process of evolution means blessings for you, means preservation, enjoyment, perfection, reproduction, all that develops, fructifies, ennobles, enchants your existence, an existence you have neither brought into this world, nor shall be able to keep as long as you wish, consequently an existence which cannot be regarded as one of which you are the sole master. If in this process of evolution you find the operation of the two principles of *selection* and *rejection* —the selection of things conducive to preservation and pleasure, and rejection of things hurtful to life, believe that that process is guided by another Wisdom. That Wisdom may not be in all cases suited to your ideas of such a thing. You may, for instance, find sufferings where you perhaps wished for pleasure; but can't you resign yourself to faith and be more diffident of your weak powers of comprehension than sceptical about the guidance of this wondrous frame of things? Do you mean to say that you will not concede wisdom and love in the economy of creation unless and until all your questions about life and creation are answered in detail to *your* satisfaction? If so, then we cry with the English poet Beattie,

"One part, one little part, we dimly scan,
Through the dark medium of life's feverish dream,

Yet dare arraign the whole stupendous plan
If but that little part incongruous seem."

Reflect, you do not treat me, poor mortal, thus. You have seen me to be honest, virtuous, a hater of wrong, for the last twenty years. I have preached and practised temperance, for instance, before your eyes for that time. But now there is a man who comes and tells you upon solemn oath that he has seen me reeling arm in arm with a public woman in a street near my house in Calcutta. What would you do in that case? Would you at once jump to the conclusion that I had become an inebriated wretch since you saw me last, perhaps a couple of months ago, or will you not say,—"I do not know, it is apparently impossible, there must be some explanation for it." Now there is an explanation for such an incident, which really happened in my case. One morning before day-break, news was brought to me, that a woman was lying apparently unconscious in the drain near our house. I at once went to the place and actually found a public woman of a neighbouring house lying in the drain apparently in a helpless condition from intoxication. I tried to rouse her, and when partly roused, I helped her in rising and took her by her arm and led her to her house. I was thus arm in arm with a public woman; and in as much as she was reeling at the time, I too was reeling to some extent. It was early dawn and the above-men-

tioned witness, might have been walking the streets at that hour, and might have actually seen me in that condition. What do you say? Which attitude of a friend who knows me and who has seen me under many circumstances for the last twenty years, is reasonable? Reflect now, how your logical philosophers have felt themselves bound to concede that the evidence of goodness in the economy of creation is vastly larger than the instances where it is difficult to apply such an interpretation, and also that, according to a great thinker amongst them, there is a "*large balance of probability*" in favour of believing in creation by intelligence. What do you say after this? Can you not trust to faith for the remainder? Can you not say,—"There must be some explanation for these apparently inexplicable phenomena of Nature. What is your reason for alleging that you are not prepared to concede to Providence what you daily concede to me, a poor tempted mortal? Hence has faith been truly defined as "the evidence of things unseen and the substance of things hoped for". Let us then truly and earnestly believe in wisdom and love in the Supreme.

But is it by appeal to reason alone that we have to establish the attributes of wisdom and love as attributes of the Supreme Author of our existence? Fortunately, we have not been left to grope in that way; and we have not been destined to draw entirely

upon faith. Our sense of the Infinite and our apprehension of him are intuitive and immediate. As the very act of apprehending a material object, upon reflection, necessarily gives an apprehension of space as the back-ground of that object, so our apprehension of the finite spirit, upon reflection, gives an intuitive and immediate notion of the Infinite as its back-ground. Hence our belief and faith in the Infinite Reality is intuitive. It is part of our nature and ineradicable from it. There may be races, like individuals, in whom this spiritual faculty may be feeble or dormant, as it is the case with many another instinctive endowment of human nature. But that dormancy or feebleness is no argument against its intuitive character. Love of beauty, for instance, is natural to man. The eyes of the baby in the cradle will glisten with joy, and it will stretch forth its little hand at the sight of a beautiful flower. Cultivate that natural love of beauty in the child, and he may grow up perhaps to be a Raphæl; or neglect it and he grows up like a savage with slight appreciation for beauty. Similar is the case with races. By its culture a race may become æsthetically high like the ancient Greeks or the Italians, or for want of cultivation a nation may remain dull with regard to it like some of our hill-tribes. Similarly, take the case of music. The faculty is as natural and instinctive in man as love of beauty. All nations, whether civilized or barbarous, compose their babies to sleep by

singing lullabies. Cultivate the musical faculty and you perhaps produce a Mozart or a Handel or a Tanshen; neglect it and you produce dull creatures who have no ear for it. Nationally also, for this reason, there is difference between civilized men and a race of savages. Or take, for instance, a significant example. There is no doubt of the fact that love of our fellow-men is natural and instinctive in our hearts. Otherwise there could have been no society so to say. Lions and tigers have lived in the world for long ages, and yet there is no society amongst them; for they have no social faculty in them. On the other hand, on account of this endowment the first step that the barbarous man, the forest-wanderer, takes towards civilization, is the formation of society. We naturally sympathise with our neighbour's sorrows and sufferings. But in some natures the action of sympathy is naturally weak or has been rendered more so by selfish calculations, till it is nearly dead. Think of the case of Mr. Ram Doyal who is known to be a proverbial miser. He knows one thing, understands it well, and takes care of it, namely the hoarding of money. Now, there comes a famine in that part of the country where Ram Doyal lives. Men begin to die every day, and every morning there are harrowing details of suffering in the papers. Ram Doyal daily reads them, but is not moved. Rather, when he reads the accounts of large donations by kind-

hearted people, he wonders what could have thus influenced them to part with their money. Looking to his own heart, he does not find any impulse for such an act, and he naturally concludes that these donors have been influenced by love of fame or some such low motive. Similarly, many a man in whom spirituality, or the sense of the presence of the Supreme, is dormant and feeble for lack of culture, may view the doings and sayings of devout persons as the acts of intriguing rogues who have some other objects in view, or of deluded fools who have allowed themselves to be duped by some intriguing persons. It was thus that the Western Free-thinkers of the eighteenth century looked upon religion as a device of cunning priests.

The Duty of Habitual Communion.

Spirituality, I repeat, is as natural and instinctive to man as any other natural endowment and as such requires careful cultivation. Here I come to another cardinal point in the mission of the Theistic Church of India, namely, the inculcation of the duty of habituating ourselves to holding loving communion with the Supreme. It should be our daily practice, individually speaking, and it should be our most sacred duty in our domestic and social life. A member of the Theistic Church, a real theist, I say, should not live in his daily life like an atheist, *i.e.* like

a person who has no higher being than man to look up to. If we really believe that we are embosomed in Infinite Wisdom and Love, if we truly feel that we are fed, supported and maintained in life by a loving Providence, and if we have experienced it often that loving communion with the Supreme is not only a refuge and an abode of peace for our souls, but is a means of the highest spiritual elevation to our minds, are any words of mine needed to prove the impropriety of a believer in Theism living like an atheist or a free-thinker?

Viewed from whatever light, such a duty certainly seems to be incumbent upon us. Is not gratitude a duty to a Being *from* whom, *in* whom, and *of* whom is our life? A man may be misled by false reasoning and say,—"We abide by the moral rules which are the ordinances of the Supreme; we do good to others; we fulfil the duties he has imposed upon us; that is enough, what is the good of crying Lord, Lord? It is evident He is not in need of our thanksgivings. The innumerable fellow-beings who inhabit this earth have no thought of Him and offer no thanksgiving to him. Do they fare worse for it? Providence does not wait to be thanked by them. Man can also fare well without thanksgiving." Such reasoning is essentially false and vicious; for wherein do the essential features of man's manhood lie? Certainly not in eating and drinking; not in working for his

livelihood, nor in begetting and loving children, all of which functions are discharged by all other animals; but they lie in the exercise of the higher faculties of mind and heart. And the highest of these faculties is certainly the one that links him to the Eternal. The Supreme Being has kept all other beings in the outer court of His house, as it were, but has drawn man as a son into the inner court, nay into His very presence. And it is an absolutely foolish reasoning to place man and the other animals under the same category or judge them by the same rules of conduct.

Besides, we must not suppose that man's *duties* simply mean external acts. Feelings in many cases are also parts of duty. Man's sense of duty certainly takes shape in external acts; but these acts do not, in all cases, measure the importance or the praise-worthiness of that sense of duty. Take for instance the cases of Ram and Shyam, the two sons of a pair of loving and generous parents. These two brothers are living at a distance from their home, in pursuit of their business or employment. Ram is a prosperous man of business, earning many hundreds of rupees in the month; whereas poor Shyam gets only thirty rupees per month as his salary, he being a clerk in some Government office. Ram, more for fear of public opinion than from any loving regard for his parents, sends thirty rupees per month

in aid of their home-expenses, but is so far lacking in filial affection, that he has not seen them for years; whereas poor Shyam sends only three rupees per month; but he has made it a rule to come to them once a year and to spend a few days at least by the side of the loving mother. He never receives a letter from that mother but he kisses it and places it on his head as a mark of respect for his parents; then opens and reads it and immediately proceeds to act according to the orders contained in it. Nay he does more. The first thing he does after opening his eyes in the early morning is to think of his Creator and also to remember his dear parents and to pray for them. Now what foolish person is there who will argue that because Ram sends more pecuniary aid for his parents than Shyam, the former is a more dutiful son than the latter? Please remember, in all the relationships of life the internal attitude is of greater consequence than external acts. And a man who does not cultivate a loving and grateful attitude towards the Supreme Father and Mother is a base creature, neglectful of a most sacred duty.

Not only that: the exercise of loving communion with the Supreme Being is a source of peace and strength for the tempted, buffeted and care-worn souls of men. The lovers of God, in all ages and all lands, have borne testimony to this fact. What the solitary nest is to the frightened bird,

what the shady bush in the forest is to the arrow-stricken deer, what the safe harbour is to the passengers of a tempest-tossed ship, what the mother's bosom is to the suffering child, the same is the peaceful shelter at the feet of the Supreme Being. Loving communion with Him removes the excitement of an excited spirit; pacifies the sorrowful heart; lulls the buffeting cares; inspires hope in the despairing bosom; and produces a spirit of calm tranquillity by raising the soul above the pleasures and sorrows of life. This abode of peace is ready at hand within the reach of all. Retire, O man, in your moments of trouble to the feet of this indwelling Power, in a spirit of resignation, and rest and refreshment, hope and strength, peace and joy, will be your portion.

Am I indulging in metaphors in the above lines? Certainly not. I once more reply that it is a fact to which the lovers of God in all ages and all lands have borne repeated testimony. The *Upanishads* teem with passages indicating the calm repose and peacefulness that flow out of spiritual communion with the Supreme. The main teaching of the *Gita* turns round the pivot,—how to enable men to rise above the pleasures and privations of life, thereby enabling them to attain to peace. The most glorious passages in the utterances of the old prophets of Judaism and of the saints of Christendom

bear testimony to the hope, peace and joy they found in Divine communion. Is that all the working of men's fevered brains? Or a hoax invented to delude mankind? Ah no! all that is the record of an experienced fact, and the tidings of a joy defying description.

I transcribe a few passages from the autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, the second great leader of Brahmoism. These passages occur in the 12th chapter of the book,—"In days gone by, when I used to see men and women worshipping their little idols in their temples, I used to long for the day when I would behold the Infinite Being direct in my soul and worship Him there. At that time this longing was in my soul day and night. Now at the stage I am speaking of, I first saw the effulgent and eternal Person in things occupying space; and there was an end of my sorrows. I was satisfied with this much of revelation; but He was not satisfied by conceding only this much. So long I was viewing Him in the material world, at a distance, as it were: but now he revealed Himself in my spirit. I saw Him in my soul. The presiding Deity of the Universe became the indwelling Deity of the temple of my heart; and I began to hear deep and solemn commands from that source. A thing that I never hoped for, now transpired. My actual possession, at this moment, was far beyond my previous

expectations. Thus, being lame I yet crossed, as it were, a high mountain. I had not the slightest inkling that such a thing was in store for me. * * * * Without finding Him in the soul so long, I was dead as it were, and my heart was vacant, and I was deep sunk in the darkness of a sad and sorrowful spirit. *Now the sun of love dawned on that spirit and brought life with it. My slumber of years was dispelled; the gloom of melancholy was gone. When I found Him, the stream of my life rushed forward on its new course; and my soul was strengthened. Then I felt that I was a wayfarer in a new path of love.*"

I have purposely italicised the last lines to draw the reader's attention to the declarations contained in them. These declarations bear evidence to Devendranath's claim to be regarded as a Rishi or seer of the Supreme.

It is a well-known fact that all sincere lovers of God in all ages have found loving communion with Him to be a source of ineffable bliss, of peace and repose, of joy and spiritual strength. It was at such a moment of spiritual elation that the Rishi of the *Upanishads* cried,—"This Supreme Spirit is dearer than son, dearer than wealth, dearer than every other thing." It was the discovery of this abode of peace that made Jesus cry,—"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, I will give you rest." The rest that he promised to the tempted and

buffeted spirits of men was certainly the peace that was to be found at the feet of his Divine Father. It was a matter of his internal spiritual experience. I need not multiply instances. I once more cry, can you, O man, who is buffeted in the midst of the trials and temptations of life, who is distracted by his daily cares, and tired by a ceaseless conflict, can you be, should you be, indifferent to such a source of joy and blessing within your reach? It is madness that alone can lead you to say,—Yes. Mankind, in general, has never said so. On the contrary, the history of mankind bears evidence to the fact that the care-worn and fatigued spirits of men have flocked in numbers around the great masters who promised them rest. There lay the chief attraction of a Buddha, a Jesus or a Mahomet. Their charm was irresistible, because they promised rest, repose and strength to tempted mankind. Even now numbers gather around great teachers, because they hope to find rest and strength in the midst of the struggles of their lives, a fact fit for the reflection of theistic preachers who want to draw men to their way of thinking. If they succeed in winning men to their side, they must do so by inspiring hopes of deliverance, and not by decrying the errors and superstitions of others. It is an error to suppose that the main function of a new faith is to destroy other men's errors and superstitions. It is the function of religion

always more to build than to break, more to fulfill than to destroy, more to give support than to take away a false staff. For whatever you may preach and say, however you may brandish your sword for the destruction of error, men will surely judge the faith you offer by the practical question,—does it give solace and peace, hope and strength, to the tired spirit? It is certain that thirsty men would rather drink muddy water than swallow sparkling sand. The Supreme Spirit says,—"If you have obtained peace and strength in your own souls, then preach your faith for the acceptance of others, otherwise not."

But we do promise peace, we promise joy ineffable, and strength that girds up the soul for its ceaseless conflict. Therefore, we call upon every man and woman who is harassed by cares or tried by temptations, to retire to the feet of the supremely loveable Being and seek to hold loving communion with Him.

Thus I have tried to prove how habitual loving communion with the Supreme is a sacred duty for every man and woman who really believes in him, who is not an agnostic or a free-thinker. I have also tried to show that in it lies the hope of their finding an abode of peace and strength in the midst of their earthly tribulations.

Loving Communion as a Fountain of Life.

I go further and say that such loving communion

is the spring from which flow all the streams of pure and elevated life. All righteousness, all unselfishness, all deeds of duty and sacrifice, all ennobling thoughts of the mind or impulses of the heart, all philanthropy, spring out of this fountain. It is a poor philosophy which says,—"Always seek the greatest good of the greatest number; for by it alone the moral quality of your actions will be judged." It leaves unsaid what it is that imposes on a man the necessity for seeking the greatest good of the greatest number in prefefence to his own immediate enjoyments. Perhaps the final appeal is to be made to man's selfishness. The philosopher must end by saying—'Because the greatest good of the greatest number also involves your own good; and by injuring their happiness you injure your own.' Even these happiness-theory-men, after all, have been obliged to modify their theory to this extent, that they hold that it is a law of human nature that happiness, to be attained, must never be sought; that to seek happiness in preference to an impulsive love for others is the most effective way of killing it, and that with regard to the attainment of happiness, it can be justly said that those who seek it do not get it, and it is given to others who do not seek it.

Turning our faces away from this utilitarian theory of morals, then, we feel, on the other hand, the force of the saying—"Take care of your heart, for out of it

flow all the streams of life". Let me illustrate the truth of the saying by a parable. Suppose you engage a nurse to take care of your baby. The nurse is an intelligent, honest and dutiful woman; she has studied the art of nursing well; she is clever and knows the needs and requirements of babies. Generally speaking, she takes care of your child well. It is duly washed, dressed, fed, and laid to sleep in proper time, and you have very little cause for complaint. But yet there is a difference between its mother and that nurse. There are occasions when you notice some defects. The poor woman was perhaps too tired after keeping up some nights and fell asleep, when the baby cried and cried and fell to the ground without her noticing it; or perhaps she was too busy with other things and the baby was not fed in proper time one day; or she forgot to change its clothes too long on another day; or perhaps one day when the food was making, the baby kicked at the pan in the nurse's hand, and made it fall to the ground, whereby all the milk was spoiled for that evening, and the mother being away, the baby had to starve for hours, and besides received a good thrashing from its nurse. But reflect upon the difference between that nurse and its mother. The mother is ever wakeful, ever watchful, ever diligent, ever attentive, a capable nurse without training, an untiring assistant without remuneration, and a diligent care-taker

without praise. The motherly heart in her is the spring from which flow all the streams of her daily duties and hourly occupations, as far as that baby is concerned. Similarly, O man, if you truly love this supremely lovable Being, out of that love will flow all your nobleness, all your self-sacrifice, all your philanthropy, all your passionate regard for knowledge and duty ; strength will come to you without your knowing it ; you will be carried forward, over your trials and temptations, to what is good and true and holy. That love will place your heart in unison with the Supreme Will and the Divine Inspiration will enwrap your soul, and will enable you to rise above your sins and temptations.

This fact of rising above our sins and temptations is a wonderful mystery of our human nature. What miracles are daily achieved in the spiritual world, by the operation of an ardent love of God ! A Saul of to-day is turned into a Paul of to-morrow. Under its influence a man leaves off the torn garments of his old habits, takes up his staff and begins a new journey. Indeed ! what the terrors of false and foolish doctrines like eternal hell could not achieve, is effected within the twinkling of an eye as it were. The sinner turns his back upon his old sins and begins to long for a new country, a promised land, where he can hold unclouded loving intercourse with the Great Eternal. Let love for the Supreme be generated, I once more

repeat, in the hearts of men and women, and out of it will flow all the streams of regenerated life.

Thus to enable men and women to hold loving communion with the Supreme and thereby to raise and ennoble them, and to lift them above their sins and temptations, is the first, the grandest, and the most spiritual part of the mission of the Theistic Church of India.

The Immortality of the Soul.

In this loving communion with the Supreme lies the germ of another faith which is also a marked feature of the faith of the Theistic Church of India, namely, the faith in the immortality of the soul. In the state of loving communion with the Supreme, there comes an inward conviction to the soul that such communion knows no limitation of space or time, and that it is for all time. In ascending to the Highest we ascend above death. The soul refuses to believe that after having drawn us into his closer embrace and after having awakened in us such spiritual aspirations, He will doom us to destruction. The joys of that spiritual relationship bear an internal evidence that they would be ever-lasting. Thus far we are certain; all other speculations, such as the form in which we shall live, the place or sphere whither we may be transported after death, or the new relations into which we may enter, &c., are more or less involved

in uncertainty, and individual believers are left free to arrive at conclusions that seem most reasonable to them. The members of the Theistic Church, in general, believe that the continuance after death of the personal identity of the soul means the continuance of its individual endowments and associations; so many of them think of their dead friends and pray for them. The cultivation of this loving remembrance of the dead is found to be a great help towards the promotion of loving communion with the Eternal. There is much force in that reasoning of Buckle, to be found in his posthumous works, that one of the profoundest mysteries of human nature is the sense of union in love with the departed that we cherish even after their death. Our union with the dead does not cease with the dissolution of the physical frame. We continue to love them; nay the love in many cases grows stronger after death. As long as the dear one was living, our love at times received shocks from the consideration of his or her actual frailties; but death brings on a change in that respect. Our love chastened, as it were, by sorrow, drops all considerations of their frailties and kindles up into a flame. So, in a manner, our dear ones become more living to us after death than during life. The fact that almost all the great teachers of mankind began to reign over the hearts of men more after their death than during life, is also an illustration of this truth. If we

bound to the dead like this, it evidently proves that Nature, or in other words the Providence of the Almighty, does not mean the cessation of the relationship between the dead and the living. Does Nature then mean a mockery by dooming the beloved ones to complete annihilation, yet keeping us tied to them? Such mockery is nowhere to be found in the economy of Providence. Hence our belief in the immortality of the soul is a part of the faith of the Theistic Church; and the cultivation of a loving remembrance of the beloved dead is often found to be helpful to our spiritual life.

The Social Mission of the Theistic Church.

Next after this comes the social and moral part of the Church's work. We in India have been taught to look upon pure and spiritual Theism as anti-social. Under the influence of Vedantism, which is highly intellectual and analytical, the theory of *maya* or illusion has been invented, which looks upon society and its relations as so many snares, the greatest wisdom of an aspirant for final deliverance lying in shunning them. This anti-social philosophy has done an incalculable amount of harm in this country. It has drawn away into the life of mendicancy hundreds of spiritually disposed persons, and has thereby robbed society of their personal influence and example, and has led many others, whom circumstances prevented

from adopting that life, but who yet believed in their hearts the prevalent theory, to pine away in life by looking upon the world as a prison-house. It has checked the spirit of philanthropy as a part of religious exercise, and has made the cast of Hinduism sombre and melancholy. It is the mission of the Theistic Church of India to raise Hinduism and Hindu society from this sombre and gloomy view of life and this tainting touch of Vedantism by teaching that human society is a Divine dispensation, and all its relationships are sacred and spiritual. The Supreme Being has placed individual man in this world, in the midst of other individuals, tied together by various loving relationships. Each of those relationships has duties apportioned to it which are sacred and important and cannot be neglected without degrading man, or without degrading human society. The proper direction of the relationship between husband and wife or between parent and children, or between brothers and sisters, or between neighbour and neighbour, or between the citizen and the country, or between man and society, is an essential and important condition of the growth and development of the human soul. Hence is morality an essential part of man's true spirituality.

Accordingly the second feature of modern Indian theism is that it is essentially social and moral. Being social, it seeks to reform and improve human

society; to remove those abuses that afflict communities of men and interfere with their true spiritual progress; and being moral, it directs its efforts to the improvement of human character as the best means of holding loving communion with the Supreme. Thus it will be seen that every domain of social reform, whether it be the abolition of caste, or the lifting up of the depressed classes, or the education and emancipation of woman, or the discontinuance of child marriages, or the allowance of widow-re-marriages, legitimately comes within its scope, and is a necessary part of its programme of reformatory work.

This social side of theism also necessarily leads it to look upon philanthropy as a part of its spiritual culture. Like at John the apostle of Christ it says.—"he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" It was a pet saying of Rajah Ram Mohun Roy, reported by all his friends,—"Brother, brother, the service of man is the service of God." During his travels, all over the country and in parts beyond it, he must have witnessed the deep piety of his people, the austerities they practised, and the great sacrifices they went through in the name of religion. The religiousness of the Hindu race has ever been a marked trait of their national character from the earliest times. The Greeks, the Scythians, the Mongolians, the Chinese,

whoever travelled in this land, were struck by the earnest piety of the Hindu race and bore testimony to many excellences of character by which they were distinguished. Nor is internal testimony wanting. It is indeed wonderful to reflect how much our men and women have suffered for what they considered to be their religious duty. It is a recorded fact that during the close of the eighteenth century a man performed the astonishing vow of measuring the whole length of the land from Hardwar to Ramesvar, a distance of many thousands of miles, with his own body as a measuring rod—a vow even now observed by many pious souls for smaller distances. That man's vow took nine years in performance. Then just think of the many hundreds of young women who freely and willingly immolated themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands. I know there was compulsion in many cases; the cruel hand of superstitious and perhaps interested relatives often tied the victims to the pyres or forced them into submission. But numerous cases are also on record where the sacrifice was a purely voluntary one. I cannot stop here to record all those cases, that have occurred amongst my own relations, but I cannot resist the temptation of recording two cases that were compiled by Miss S. D. Collet, the biographer of Rajah Ram Mohun Roy, in England, from the old files of an Anglo-Indian paper of Calcutta, of the Rajah's own times. She read out the reports of these

cases to me during my visit to England in 1888. I reproduce them from memory. The first case was that of a young Brahman called Nilu who died at Kalighat, near Calcutta. It was during the days of Ram Mohun Roy's anti-suttee agitation. Now, Nilu had two wives; both of them were young, and both of them decided to burn themselves on their husband's funeral pyre. Both of them accompanied the corpse to the cremation ground. According to a Government Regulation passed in 1813, the police officers mustered strong on the occasion to see that no force was applied. Rajah Ram Mohun Roy's Vigilance Committee also attended to see the Government Regulations carried out, and to try their persuasions on the young women to desist from such a course. To their persuasions the first wife made answer by saying—"Give back our husband and we will live." When baffled in their effort to dissuade the first wife, they approached the second one and tried all their appeals upon her. She did not make any reply, but simply said, 'Behold, there she is burning, look, here I am going also,' and quietly ascended the pyre.

The second was a still more remarkable incident. It occurred at Cawnpore in the N. W. Provinces. The lady belonged to a highly respectable family, and was a young woman of twenty-two or twenty-three. She came to the cremation ground accompanied by her weeping relatives and her only son of two or three

years. The English Magistrate of the District, with his wife, was present on the occasion. I vividly remember the description of her conversation with the suttee given by the Magistrate's wife and published in a contemporary journal. To all the reasonings and appeals of the Magistrate and his wife the lady quietly turned a deaf ear. Just at the time of her ascending the pyre, her attention was drawn to her crying child, and the wailings of her friends and relatives began to rend the skies. She quietly stood for some minutes closing her arms on her bosom, with her eyes closed, as if lost in contemplation. Then she cried out, addressing her God,—"Ram, Ram, do not desert me now; Sita, Savitri, give me strength at this moment." It was the same thing as "my God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" of Jesus. "After this" says the Magistrate's wife, "she as calmly ascended the pyre as we mount the steps of our houses."

I shall never forget the day and the hour when Miss Collet read those reports to me, big tear-drops trickling down her cheeks, and herself ending the reading by saying —"Oh! never despair of preaching religion in a country where women could do all this."

Indeed India has just reason for being proud of the religiousness of the Hindu race. Even now visit any of the places of pilgrimage during the days of noted gatherings, be a silent observer, mark the sayings and doings of the multitudes that gather from distant

parts of the country, try to gather the histories of the poor men and women who have assembled there, and you will be struck by the earnestness, the fervour, the spirit of self-sacrifice and the depth of conviction of the many thousands of the common people assembled there.

Let me record another instance. It occurred at Madras during one of my visits there. One morning, as I was engaged in my studies in my lodgings, news was brought me that a remarkable Hindu widow had come with a peculiar mission to the house of a friend of mine. I went to the place to meet her. When there I found a young woman, a widow and an ascetic, majestically seated like a devotee and singing a tamil song. They told me it was a psalm in praise of her Deity. As she was singing with her hand on her little stringed instrument, big tear-drops were trickling down her cheeks. The psalm over, I began conversation with her through an interpreter. Her whole history was this—she belonged to a respectable middle class family; after her widowhood she took the vow of attaching herself as a maid-servant to the temple of Tripati, her God. She was still attached to that temple and on that occasion had come to Madras to collect funds to give a new set of jewellery to her God. My mind at that time was being seriously exercised by the case of a number of famine orphans whom I had met in the streets. I opened to her the

proposal of starting a shelter and an orphanage for these children, and asked her if she could be a mother to them. My proposal fell flat upon her mind. She did not look upon it as a religious act. As far as I remember, she observed—"What have I to do with these children who have lost caste by taking food at the hands of all castes; they are suffering the consequences of their acts in a previous state of existence; who can help them? That is no business of mine."

These long accounts may be looked upon as digressions; but I have purposely given them to indicate that the Indian people, from the oldest times, have never lacked religiousness in their nature. But that religiousness has always had two characteristics,—first, it has been largely coloured by their pessimistic view of life engendered by the Vedanta; secondly, it has had its play largely in external ceremonial forms, penances, and austerities. Religion as the voice of a loving Father, and as a messenger to suffering humanity, had never occurred to our teachers. Now has come the time to give religion that turn in India,—*to divert the religiousness of the people to philanthropy.* It is something like diverting the currents of our mighty rivers into new channels, for irrigation purposes, by digging canals.

Now, the Theistic Church of India has taken up that duty as a part of its mission. If it neglects philanthropy, it will do less than half of its important

work. Love of man certainly feeds love of God, and philanthropy forms an essential part of our mission. But it is at the same time difficult. Nothing is more difficult than to change the traditional usages and time-honored customs of a people. Men's thoughts so naturally fall into the grooves through which they have coursed for centuries, that it is a tiresomely long process by which they can be lifted out of them. Through the influence of Vedantism, as I have already said, mendicancy has obtained a firm hold on the popular mind. The conviction has been woven into our mental texture, as it were, that the path of true *jnana* or knowledge lies through renunciation. The true Hindu looks upon a *sannyasi* or mendicant, dressed in his saffron garb, as an embodiment of piety and spirituality, and as far as the ordinary house-holder is concerned, he knows nothing higher than the practice of *karma* or the observance of the rules of external rites and ceremonies. And even the ordinary house holder looks upon the *sannyasi* or mendicant as an ideal of perfection. The conviction is so ingrained in the Hindu mind, that let a man but wear the mendicant's garb and profess contempt for the world, he is at once installed as a spiritual guide and worshipped as such. And the beauty of the thing lies here, that this *guruism* will continue undisturbed inspite of many secret and open irregularities in such a guide's life. I have seen

with my own eyes a man in a mendicant's dress drinking wine in a public street, singing indecent songs and taking indecent liberties with a woman, yet all the time worshipped and helped with pecuniary contributions by a number of common people as their *guru* or spiritual preceptor. Can things go further? Can there be a better proof of the ingrained popular faith in mendicancy?

Then think of the thousands of Hindu mendicants, going about from door to door, or congregating in places of pilgrimage, or living retired in forests or hill tops, who are being daily supported by the people with their voluntary contributions in money and in kind, without their ever asking for it. Can anything more forcibly prove the natural and habitual reverence of the Hindu race for their religious teachers, and for their traditional forms of piety?

How can the modern Indian Theistic Church hope to easily stem the tide of these popular traditional notions of piety, or change the channel of Hindu religiousness from the paths of mendicancy and formal ritualism into those of active philanthropy? The course must be necessarily slow. And as an illustration of this truth, let it be observed that outside critics remark that the Brahmo Samaj is already falling back from the field of active philanthropy which it once tried to occupy. It is a fact of daily observation to the outside public, that even in those

centres where there are active Brahmo Samaj Congregations, their members, in many cases, stand aloof from most of the popular and philanthropic movements. It is a matter of daily remark that their piety is more mystical and sentimental than practical. The reason perhaps is that the members of the Samaj are being unconsciously influenced by the popular traditional notions of piety ; and finding it uncongenial to give a philanthropic turn to their faith, are unknowingly imbibing the prevalent notions of mysticism and sentimentalism of the *bhakti* schools of thought. Whether this be a true diagnosis of our case or not, there is no doubt about the fact that the spirit of active philanthropy does not yet form such a prominent feature of the religious life of the Brahmo Samaj as it should. But it is time that change in that respect should come; and there are signs that the change is already coming. The social part of the mission of the church necessarily involves it. A religion that teaches that man's social life is a Divine ordination, cannot shut its eyes to the many claims of society upon it and specially to the many social evils under which India at present groans. Active philanthropy should indeed form an important and integral part of the religious life of the Church of Universal Theism.

A significant aspect of the social side of this modern Indian theism is the importance that it attaches to home-life. Of all the dispensations of the Almighty,

for the education and perfection of man, the evolution of home-life has been the most far-reaching in its effects. What the shady retreat or the nursery is to the young plant, that has been the home to the human child; a refuge of rest and protection, without which human society would have crumbled away. Not only that, such a refuge of rest and protection is extremely useful to men and women for the growth and cultivation of their higher faculties, which go a great way to ennoble human nature and to improve human society. A good and orderly home is the best institution under which the moral and spiritual progress of society can be attained, and the best of places where an altar of the Supreme Being can be raised.

Hence the Theistic Church attaches considerable importance to the duty of creating good and orderly homes. But the question of creating good and orderly homes necessarily involves the question of raising the present social position of woman in India. As long as woman is degraded, despised and downtrodden, so long the improvement of our home-life is difficult of attainment. The best way of raising Indian women from their present state of degradation is to give them education and social liberty. I have no time to enter here into a detailed discussion of the objections that are generally put forward by a class of critics in this country against the elevation and social emancipation of woman.

Suffice it to say that the conviction is daily strengthening in me, that no race that consents to keep its women in bondage and degradation can ever attain to true national greatness. The back-bone of a nation's true worth is to be found in its homes and in its women.

That being our conviction, the members of the Theistic Church early interested themselves in improving the condition of their women. From the earliest dawn of the movement they directed their attention to female education. In 1849, when the late Drinkwater Bethune opened his girls' school in Calcutta, Maharshi Devendranath was one of the first few who sent their daughters to that school, and he took steps to give his daughters, side by side with his sons, a thoroughly good education. Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen, our third great leader, went further, and, as early as 1864, established a congregational meeting for the wives and sisters of his first followers. He first took out ladies to parties in his Christian Missionary friends' houses; and opened an adult young ladies' school in 1871, in which he placed his own wife. Subsequently he established the Arya Nari Samaj, the Victoria College for Women and such other institutions exclusively intended for women. The members of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, the youngest section of the Church, have gone still further. They have removed the *parda* or system of screening women, have admitted them to higher university

education, have given them seats in the working committees of their Church, and have established a large boarding school in Calcutta for their education. I may also notice here, that chiefly through the exertions of Mr. Sen, a law was passed by Government in 1872 which has abolished child marriage by enacting that no girl should be married before she completes at least her fourteenth year, has made polygamy penal and has opened the door for intermarriages and widow-remarriages, thereby removing great disabilities from the lot of Indian women.

It must be added, however, that the root of the Theistic Church's advocacy of the emancipation of women lies deeper,—in the recognition of the right of women as human beings to know, love, and serve the Supreme Being. In the procession-song that was sung during the street procession, led by Mr. Sen, during the anniversary festival of 1868, there was a passage which announced to the world :—

"Men and women have an equal right *to know God* ; and whoever truly loves God, the same can attain to salvation, there is no distinction of caste."

Properly speaking in that spiritual freedom to know, love, and serve the Supreme Being lies the basis of all other freedom. Women as well as men are free to exercise their powers for the acquisition of knowledge, for their spiritual advancement, for rendering their lives useful, for the service of mankind, and for

discharging such other duties as may come to them as members of society. It is impious on the part of man to seek to prevent woman from fulfilling her destiny. Woman is to be man's associate not only in domestic life, but also in religious and social work, and in every form of service to humanity. Her counsels are useful and necessary for the betterment of society. She is the guardian angel of good manners and morals, and she must be left unfettered to do her work. So the Theistic Church has female emancipation as an important part of its social work in India.

Next after the improvement of home-life and the promotion of active philanthropy, the third prominent feature of this natural and universal theism arising from the social side of its mission, is the abolition of caste. The hereditary caste system in India has been productive of many social evils. It has given undue pre-eminence to the priestly class, leading to all the evils of unrestrained sacerdotalism ; it has depressed the lower ranks of society, thereby degrading them to a most abject condition ; it has divided and sub-divided the Hindus of the country, till all feeling of the unity of the race is almost dead ; it has brought in a most abject form of social slavery, which has altogether repressed individual independence, and has thereby extinguished all real manhood in our men ; it has checked foreign travel, national enterprise and the industrial development of the country. But to the theist it

is objectionable, because it is based on the virtual denial of the brotherhood of man. He cannot countenance it in his own person, nor can he tolerate it in society. Hence from an early period of the history of the Church, from 1860, so to say, there have been vigorous efforts to break its chains. From that time the younger generation of Brahmos, under the leadership of Mr. Sen, openly discarded it. Those who were born Brahmins, for instance, discarded their sacred threads, the badges of caste; and many came forward to contract marriages with women of other castes than their own, a thing most horrible in the eyes of orthodox Hindus. To speak truly, most of the present prejudice of the orthodox Hindu community against the Brahmo Samaj is due to two causes—1st, its advocacy of the abolition of caste, second, its advocacy of the social emancipation of woman.

The fourth great feature of this social side of the Church's mission is the great importance that it attaches to the purity of man's moral conduct. It is essentially moral. It holds that man's spiritual progress depends on the moral purity of his mind and character; that righteousness in thought and action is an essential condition of man's communion with the Supreme.

This feature is highly important in this country; because here there has been, in many sects, something like a divorce between religion and morality. Not

to speak of the followers of certain schools of the sect called Tantrics, who openly indulged in wine and promiscuous intercourse with women, and raised ordinary forms of bestiality into forms of religious culture, or of the Vallabhacharyas of Guzrat, whose priests made undisguised indulgence in immorality a mark of their religious pre-eminence, there have been and still are many mystical sects in this country with whom the practice of immorality is not incompatible with the attainment of a high degree of spirituality;—a view from which the Theistic Church turns away in disgust. According to its principles, purity in thought and deed, utter selflessness in pursuit of truth, strict observance of the moral law, honesty in thought, speech, and action, courage to shun the wrong and do the right, and unfailing adherence to the rules of justice, are the basal principles on which alone can be raised the superstructure of a truly pious life. That being its principle, it seeks to carry on an unceasing war against such social evils as intemperance, the encouragement of prostitution, of dancing girls, of the native theatres, where professional public women are actresses and have thus an opportunity of freely mixing with young men belonging to respectable middle class families, and all other forms of secret or open social vice to which modern Indian society is a prey by reason of the unsettling effects of modern education. In passing, let me call upon

theists in all parts of the country to band themselves together into a strong and compact body and enter their strong, earnest and persistent protest against intemperance, nautches, theatres of professional public women, and such other social evils. Never mind the unpopularity that the Samaj would thereby incur amongst certain so-called respectable classes; for I feel so strongly on this subject, that I would sooner see the Brahmo Samaj at the bottom of the sea than see it living like a waiter at a rich man's table, supplying the glasses and indirectly sharing the delights of the debauchery.

Objections Answered.

I have thus laid down the cardinal features of the mission of the Theistic Church of India. I now proceed to notice some of the objections that thoughtful men and honest critics sometimes urge against that mission.

First, there are those who think that the ideal of natural and universal theism is too vague and intangible to form the basis of effective religious culture. Men require, say they, something to stand upon, something to go by, something to clasp to their bosom, something they can vividly represent to themselves as real. Nothing that is not tangible and real can awaken the emotions and satisfy the heart. And whatever philosophers may say, or

our Vedantists may proclaim, the gratification of the emotions is the thing that ultimately decides human conduct in judging about religion. And as an illustration of the truth of what they say they produce the instance of maternal love. Is maternal love an abstraction to you? You have the mother's loving eyes to behold, her sweet vioce to soothe your ears, her thousand and one kind acts to cheer you up. None of these are abstractions; they are stern realities to your sense and thought, hence you can realize maternal love and pour out your best emotions for it. But your Supreme Being, in whatever terms you may describe Him, is a vague and intangible substance. However you may decry Herbert Spencer's Infinite and Eternal Energy, it is the only definition which that Infinite Reality is capable of.

And in support of their contention they further add that the doctrine of the one Reality behind the Universe is not at all new in the world. It became early known to the ancients in almost all lands. But along with it the doctrines of *incarnation* and *mediation* became invented to supply the gap, as it were, and to remove the vagueness and intangiblity of this Reality. To the Christian, for instance, God is not an intangible entity, it is He who came down to Judea, assumed the shape of man, and did some tangible acts which can be spiritually grasped, chewed and masticated, and can thereby help in the formation of spiritual

life. Is not the idea beautiful, say they, that of God taking upon himself the infirmities of man in order to give him guidance? An American visitor once called at Hawarden castle to wait upon the late Mr. Gladstone when the latter was prime minister. When ushered into the drawing room by the servant, the American visitor was struck to find Mr. Gladstone on his four legs, playing the horse to one of his grand-children, the little boy whipping and calling him—"a good for nothing horse". Is not there something very charming in the picture of the prime minister of England laying aside, for the time being, his official dignity and playing the part of a little child? Similarly it is charming to think how God Almighty had set aside his Divine glory, as it were, and assumed upon himself the weaknesses of humanity, in order to be able to live amongst men. His doings and sayings in that state are all tangible like the many offices of maternal love, and mankind can handle them for the purpose of spiritual edification.

Thus I have summarily expounded the main contention of the believers in the doctrine of incarnation. There are others who do not go so far; who seem to be struck perhaps by the apparent inconsistency in believing in Perfection putting on imperfection and the Infinite assuming the limitations of flesh and blood, but who take shelter in an intermediate doctrine of mediation, like the Hebrew prophets of

old or like the Mahomedans who say that God Almighty never took upon himself the infirmities of flesh and blood, but has accredited agents through whom he has published infallible laws for the guidance of mankind. As a man, Mahomet was a fallible being, a weak mortal, but as a prophet, as a law-giver, he was infallible, and should be implicitly obeyed as far as that part of his work is concerned.

This doctrine of mediation also, say its advocates, is a great advantage to mankind. It gives something tangible and reliable. Men have something to go by, something they can chew and masticate and reduce into the substance of their spiritual lives.

In the place of these great advantages, say, these critics, you advocates of natural and universal theism offer mankind a form of weak eclecticism, a vague fancy which is thoroughly intangible. Your creed of theism, to mention the simile once used by a Christian critic of the Brahmo Samaj, represents the different conjugations of the verb 'to think'. It is what I think, you think and they think. You have no reality to grasp, no ground to stand upon, no authority to go by, no reliable line to act upon. Your theism is too vague and unreal to form a lasting basis for religious culture.

Well, our reply to all these objections is that it is not true that the theism of the Theistic Church of India deals with vague unreality or has been

cast adrift on a sea of uncertainty as to its leading principles. I have already said that our theism is not the cold deism of the eighteenth century, nor is it that vague conception of an "Infinite and Eternal Energy from which every thing proceeds." We believe in this Ultimate Reality as a living and active Providence. This Providence has unfolded His purposes in the material universe, in the world of animate life, in the life of man, in human history and in the moral and spiritual evolution of minkind. No race has been left without His revelation, and no body of men without His guidance. The Supreme Being is no vague conception to us; but it is He who has taught us through the Rishis of India, and through the sages and seers of other lands. Nay He is leading mankind even now. Whoever seeks Him truly and earnestly, to him He is ever near, and to him He reveals His truth. Sincerity of heart, earnestness of longing, singleness of mind, and fidelity of disposition are the only things needed to make a spiritual seer. Of course men are frail and fallible. They at times mix up Divine truth with their mortal errors, just as rain-water, dropping from the sky, inevitably gets itself mixed up with the dirt of your terrace or your yard; yet truth has never been denied to the longing spirit. Man has to examine and receive it with the help of his own internal spiritual light. Thus *reverence* should not abrogate the function of his

individuality, nor should his individuality set itself up at the cost of his *reverence*; his past should not extinguish the light of his present; nor should his present arrogate to itself all authority as the only source of light. There is a passage in the *Yogabashishta*, a celebrated ancient religious work of this country, which goes on to say;—"Man's own individual light, the light of good scriptures, and the light of a *guru* or venerated spiritual guide, when these three enter into a man's spiritual culture, he surely finds the Supreme Being." There also the first place has been given to individual light; and individual inspiration has been marked out as the thing by which man has to judge the scriptures and revered living personalities. Your own inspiration, O man, the light that the Supreme Being has revealed to you individually, is your guide in choosing the spiritual path for yourself. That does not mean that you are to turn your back on the scriptures, or on the great teachers, or on your personal guides. To do such a thing is to be guilty before the Author of your salvation, to deny Divine dispensation. Be reverential to all dispensations of Providence; have the humble, teachable, reverent and longing spirit of a man truly hungering and thirsting for spiritual life; but always attach primary importance to your individual light, to the voice of your conscience, as the most sacred possession that the Great One has accorded to you.

Judge every thing by it, be led by it and stake all for it. For, the lowering of this light is suicidal to the best interests of the soul. It is a well-known saying of Tauler, the German sage, that what the water is to the fish or the air to the bird, that should be the contemplation of the Deity to the soul. But how can the soul feel that spiritual life unless it has perfect spiritual freedom. To enclose a living human soul in a book or a creed, without the perfect freedom of its choice, is to take a fish from the sea, and enclose it in a jug of water or to catch a bird from the sky and shut it up in a cage. There is much truth in the observation made by Emerson that wherever there is an appeal to authority in matters spiritual, there is evidence that spiritual life is dead.

Now, I must turn to the questions of incarnation and mediation to discuss them at some length. Is the doctrine of incarnation really helpful to our souls? What do we, tempted men and women, really need? In the midst of our daily trials and tribulations what do our spirits really crave for! Certainly, we crave for peace and strength. We long for a refuge where we can lay our heads as on a mother's bosom, and find peace and consolation for our perturbed spirits, and where we may find strength to rise superior to our hourly struggles. That is the most practical side of our spiritual life, the question of questions by which all other things

have to be judged. I have already shown that such peace and strength are to be attained only by loving communion with the Supreme. Therefore that loving commnnion is the most important thing for the individual soul. Plainly speaking, whatever I may read, whomsoever I may hear, whatsoever theological lore I may swallow, however devoutly I may propound a doctrine, however earnestly I may engage in polemics, however cleverly I may vindicate a theory, the most important, the most urgent question for me, a tempted and sinful being, is how to be able to hold living, loving, and direct communion with the Supreme Being, the source of all holiness. Yes, this living and direct communion is the chief thing in spiritual life. I must have direct intercourse with the indwelling Power living and working in me. That alone is truly useful and necessary, all other means and appliances for spiritual culture, such as scriptures doctrines, creeds, and the doings and sayings of great teachers &c, are merely *aids to piety*.

That being so, is it any news to the spiritually hungering soul to be told that God Almighty became incarnate in flesh and blood at a certain period of history, and in a certain place? To hear it, or to believe in it, is it the same thing as to have Him as an indwelling, living and loving Reality? Suppose the case of a man, who by reading the descriptions of the white bears of Russia, has got a longing for seeing

one of them. Is it any news for that man to be told that a white bear was once brought into the Zoological Garden of Calcutta in the year 1887? Would that satisfy his curiosity? Would even the testimony of a dozen people who, actually saw the white bear in the zoological gardens satisfy his mind? He longs to see a white bear, whereas you give him only testimony that such a one was once seen. Similarly when a human soul is longing to find the Supreme Being as an indwelling Power and to be elevated and strengthened by that Presence, you tell him that he assumed human shape in Judea or Brindabun. To that man such a news is nothing. Perhaps it will be answered that he may have the Indwelling Presence all the same, and towards the realization of that indwelling presence such a faith in incarnation is helpful. Our reply is that the doings and sayings of all great teachers are certainly helpful to our spiritual lives. Nay I go further and say that all great spiritual teachers of mankind are incarnations in another sense. In them the saving energy of the Almighty took shape and form. Each of them represents a type of piety in which a Divine idea was embodied. The impulse that overmastered them and led them to the service of man, was a Divine impulse; the ideas that guided them were Divine revelations; the light that surrounded them was the light of the Divine Presence in their souls. All great teachers of mankind did two

things; first they tried to lift up the sinner, secondly they imparted hope and strength to struggling souls. This sympathy for the sinful and fallen, and this hope and strength for the hopeless, were certainly the promptings of the indwelling Divinity within them. So in a manner they were the outlets of the indwelling Divine energy. In this sense they may be called incarnations. To that I do not demur; but the doctrine of the Perfect putting on imperfection, the Infinite putting on Himself the robe of finitude, the formless Reality putting upon Itself the limitations of flesh and blood, is a doctrine inconceivable, untenable and unnecessary. Nay, such a doctrine is mischievous; inasmuchas it draws away men's minds from the essence of spirituality, which is loving communion with the Supreme, into what is called *faith*, *i.e.*, belief and implicit trust in the narration of an historical event. But you do not sufficiently realize, perhaps I shall be told by an advocate of that doctrine, the beauty and the greatness of the idea of the Infinite assuming the limitations of humanity to lift up man. I have already laid down, with sufficient clearness, the main outlines of that doctrine. And if there be anything more to add in the way of an effective reply to that contention, let me say that I see no necessity for special Divine intervention in that way; for as in the matter of the growth of a tree from the seed into a sapling and from a sapling into a tree, there is the

joint operation of two forces, of the sap from beneath, and of light and air from above; so in the case of man's spiritual growth also there is always the joint operation of man's repentance and prayer from below, as it were, and Divine grace from above. Thus in every act of spiritual uplifting in man, there is the intervention of the Supreme Wisdom and Love. It is an unerring and constant process; an unfailing natural spiritual law. In the presence of such a grand thing, where is the necessity of inventing a highly hypothetical and imaginary doctrine? So I take leave of the untenable doctrine of incarnation as foreign to natural and universal theism.

Then the doctrine of mediation also requires a little discussion. In one sense there is mediation everywhere in nature and life. The Supreme Being is hourly executing his benign purposes through the medium of intermediate agents. He takes care of the infant child through the mother, of men and women through the family, of the individual through society, of the race through sexual selection, of the intellectual education of man through science and its teachers, of the moral interests of mankind through the organisation of the State and the Church, and of the spiritual interests of the race through the great spiritual teachers whom he has raised amongst all nations.

In a special sense we can call these great teachers

mediators between God and man. History bears evidence to the fact that the prayers these great masters offered to the Supreme Being were the prayers of their race and of their people. The supplications that were rising from thousands of hearts at the times, only found utterance in them. In this sense were they representative men, as Emerson calls them; and their real strength, their real influence with their people, lay in this representative character. It is a well-known fact of history, for instance, that the cry for spiritual freedom that Luther raised was the cry of thousands of hearts; otherwise that cry would have been unheeded in Europe. So when Mahomet raised the standard of the One True God, he carried with him the hearts of many thousands who were labouring under the load of traditional religion. The remark applies to all great reformers and spiritual teachers. Their strength lay in the representative character of their message and mission. They carried to the Supreme Being the prayers of mankind as it were. In this they were representatives of the human race.

But in another sense they were representatives of Divinity also. The messages of hope, of joy, of strength they obtained in answer to their prayers and communicated to mankind, were certainly messages from a Divine source. It was God speaking to men.

Thus they became mediators between God and

man. They spoke to God on behalf of man and spoke to man on behalf of God. But the doctrine of mediation, as known amongst the sects goes further. It believes that the laws for human guidance were *specially*, *miraculously* and *infallibly* revealed to one man *in preference to all others*, and that man is to be accepted as an *infallible law-giver*. Thus in Mahomedanism Mahomet has been installed not as an incarnation or a mediator, in the Christian sense, but as a divinely appointed organ for the communication of an infallible code of laws for mankind. The first error of this system of faith lies in installing one whom Providence meant as an *inspirer of men* and a spiritual teacher, as a law-giver. The nature of this will be manifest from the consideration of a parallel instance. Lord Nelson and General Gordon are known as great military commanders. Their great influence was due not to the infallibility of their *every* military move or tactics, but to the *inspiration* of their personal courage, their daring self-forgetfulness, their devotion to duty, and their intuitive grasp of a situation. They might have committed some tactical blunders, which however are not important. Similarly the greatness of a Buddha, or a Jesus, or a Mahomet did not lie in the infallibility of the moral code that each laid down. There were perhaps errors in those codes, owing to traditional bias, or local prejudice; but

their greatness was due to their marvellous intuition of spiritual truths, their extraordinary love of man, their extraordinary earnestness for finding out the way of deliverance, their courage and self-devotion in preaching that way, their abiding fidelity to the light received, and their utter self-forgetfulness in holding up that light before men. These things have made these great masters what they are to humanity. To say that every doctrine they preached, or every view of life they propounded, or every idea of man's destiny they held, was true and infallibly true, is to place the thing on a wrong end. That proves the short-sightedness of the disciples more than the real greatness of the great teachers.

The second error of such a doctrine of mediation lies in installing *one* great master as the *only source* of spiritual guidance. Of course there can be no objection to an individual disciple showing special reverence for, or giving special allegiance to, one alone of the great masters, in preference to all others. That is natural, that is reasonable and that is useful; but when this individual preference is set up as a doctrine for the acceptance of others, and when the failure of such acceptance is branded as a mark of spiritual perversity, the way is at once opened for narrow sectarianism. For there are three characteristics of a sectarian faith. First, it makes the revelation of the Supreme Being, which is natural and universal,

special and individual; secondly, it sets up an *inspiring teacher* as an *infallible law-giver*, thereby robbing men of freedom of private judgment; thirdly, it makes the love of that great teacher, in his disciples, a fountain of hatred for all others who differ from them in that respect. Thus the disciples of Jesus have a strong hatred for the heathen, the disciples of Mahomet for all Kafirs, and the disciples of the great Buddha for all the unenlightened. The introduction into natural and universal theism of such a sectarian spirit would be a positive calamity. It will surely develop it into a narrow and sectarian creed. When a member of the Theistic Church, for instance, will begin to allege, that he does not look upon such and such a teacher as an incarnation, or as a mediator, but only as an infallible guide in matters of spiritual life, because he finds no reason to depart from the code of duties and ceremonies laid down by that teacher, let such an one reflect, whether he is not setting up another sectarian faith like Mahomedanism, for both are monotheistic creeds, and in both the revelation made through *one* man is being set up as the guide for all. We call upon all members of the Theistic Church, to *sternly oppose* such a tendency amongst their members wherever visible. Our theism is natural, universal, free and unsectarian.

Then let us turn to the criticism offered by some outside observers, that the faith of the Theistic Church

of India is more *negative* than *positive*. It is more concerned in protesting against theological errors, and in reforming abuses, than in promoting piety and spirituality. If one is asked, say they, to define this Indian theism, he must do so by saying, that it *does not* believe in idolatry, in incarnation, in mediation, in *guruism*, in caste and so forth. The belief in the one true God, is only a part of their leaving idolatry, As amongst Unitarian Christians the name Unitarian implies one who is *not a trinitarian*, and which accordingly supplies a rallying ground for all deserters of the ancient faith, so the word Brahmo, means, say they, one who is a disbeliever in the current forms of faith and who is a deserter from the ranks of the old religious life, consequently a man whose energies are chiefly occupied with the breaking of idolatry and caste.

But it is time that that popular notion should be modified. The strength of the Theistic Church of India certainly lies or at least should lie, not in *leaving* certain things, but in *receiving* certain other *great things*. We look upon the loving communion with the Supreme Love and Wisdom, as the highest privilege of human life; that we earnestly seek, that we daily cultivate, and the abjuration of idolatry is only a necessary consequence. Similarly, Jesus and Mahomet also were great protestors, against the Scribes and Pharisees, and against the popular forms of faith,

There still remains a class of thoughtful critics who would perhaps tell us that the religion of the Theistic Church of India, by reason of its vaunted catholicity is nothing more than a system of weak eclecticism, which will never acquire sufficient nerve and muscle, to effect anything great or lasting. As in individuals so in religious bodies also, strong personality is often needed to achieve anything great. And personality means conflict and distinction. A faith that throws out the arm of friendship to all and seeks to embrace all, from a sense of so-called catholicity, is necessarily weak. By its misguided reverence, it teaches all other faiths of the world to hold their own things in high esteem, as needing no change or reform, and fails in its ultimate object of propagating itself. It was by unrelenting hostility to all other forms of faith that the modern religions of the world have spread themselves. That vigorous personality, that relentless hostility, are lacking in Indian theism, so it is fated to decline.

Let us reflect for a moment. It is true that the religion of the Indian Theistic Church is eclectic ; but its eclecticism is not a many-coloured robe of an Indian Fakir, produced by mere patch-work, but is a spiritual organic fusion produced by natural evolution. It is eclectic from the necessity of its character as natural and universal theism. I have said already and I say it again, that all the ancient faiths of the

world were based on the ground of special and miraculous revelation, and were backed by local and national prejudice. The Jews, for instance, considered their race as the only race favoured with Divine truth, from which the contemptible Gentiles were debarred. Similarly the Aryans of India looked upon their scriptures as the only depositories of sacred truth, a privilege denied to other races. But with the growth of the idea of the unity of man, and with the progress of the idea of social evolution, the universality of spiritual revelation to man is being established. It is comimg to be felt that religion is as much natural and universal as any other fact of social evolution. The time is coming when men will discriminate between the universal and the national in religion; and the effort of the Indian Theistic Church is directed towards persuading men, and the followers of all sectarian creeds, to take hold of the universal aspects of faith and to build their lives upon it, however different their local applications of the universal principle may be. And we have not the slightest doubt that that day will soon dawn upon the world.

The last and the most worthy of reflection is the remark, that like the philosophy of the philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome, modern Indian theism is confining itself amongst the educated few, and is failing to appeal to the masses. In that failure lies

its unsuitedness to be a religion of the people. All other religions commenced their work with the masses and worked up to the enlightened classes. Christianity was cradled amongst fishermen, tin-smiths and tent-makers, and slowly worked up, like the fire of a kiln, till it reached the crowned heads of the nations. But your Indian theism was born and bred up in a palace, amidst aristocratic associations and has not yet been able to reach the lower classes. Its high and superfine philosophy is unsuited to them. Addressing the enlightened few, it has to work under a great disadvantage. It has to build up a superstructure of faith in hearts where the basis for such a superstructure has been destroyed by a system of new secular education. The progress of such work is necessarily slow, as is evidenced by the little progress of this Indian theism even amongst educated men. Nor are signs visible, say these critics, of appealing to the masses. Of the few preachers and missionaries that the Theistic Church at present has, almost all confine their work to the educated classes; very few of them show any interest in the unenlightened masses.

I, for myself, plead guilty to the charge that this part of the Church's duty has not been yet fully attended to. The following is the short history of the efforts made in that direction. A commencement in that line was made in the year 1864, when a

few mission-workers were sent to Baganchra, a village in the Jessore District, who opened a school, established a mission centre, and earnestly worked amongst the Baganchra Mullicks, most of whom were agricultural people and common tradesmen, and who were living as outcast Hindus, owing to the violation of some Hindu practices, at an early time. The experiment, though intermittent, was partly successful. But the plan was unfortunately dropped, the missionaries left the place, and the experiment was given up under the excitement of the second schism.

Secondly, an application came in 1868 or 1869 from an outcast Hindu community in South Malabar and Mr. Sen sent three of his missionaries, including the late Mr. P. C. Mozoomdar, to meet the applicants and to organise a mission centre. A Samaj was organised, and it has produced some lasting results and is still doing its work. Unfortunately, no permanent missionary was left in charge of the mission, and it has come to be an association of educated men.

Thirdly, an effort in that direction was made amongst the native troops, at Bangalore, in the Madras Presidency; where a regimental Brahmo Samaj was established, which attracted a pretty large number of the native infantry; but the special work ceased with the departure of the Regiment from the station, and the Samaj now exists as a church for educated men.

The fourth experiment was commenced by the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, some years back, by opening a mission centre in the Khasi hills, and by placing one their missionaries in charge of it. The Khasi mission has been successful in drawing into its fold many of the hill people and has proved to be a successful undertaking. Of course the success is not so great as would satisfy an earnest well-wisher of the movement; but we have no cause to be disheartened. As far as we can see, the mission is taking root amongst those for whom it is intended.

The fifth experiment, though privately undertaken, was sufficiently successful to encourage us. It was commenced by the late Kalinarain Gupta of Dacca, a man of sainted memory, in whom we witnessed a living representation of *bhakti* or true love of God. He commenced the work with his own tenants in his own estate, called Kaorad, in Eastern Bengal. He mixed with the poor agricultural people as their friend and equal, and preached pure theism to them, to which he succeeded in winning over many of them. Even now many of them are cherishing very fondly the ideal left by him.

One thing is noteworthy; the experiment of preaching universal theism to the uneducated masses has been sufficiently successful to make us persevere in that course. Why it was not taken up in right earnest I cannot say. To me the question

is simple. If I, a weak and tempted man, can find solace and strength from loving communion with the Father of mercies, I do not see why any other man or woman should not have them. There may be a lurking doubt in many minds that a doctrine like universal theism is too far above the grasp of unenlightened minds, and they are sure to bring it down to superstitions. I see no reason for such apprehensions. The success of a hard monotheistic faith like Mahomedanism is an instance in point. A strictly unidolatrous faith like the faith of Islam was preached chiefly to the masses, and how wonderfully has it influenced them! Then think also how Christianity, with its wonderfully mysterious doctrine of trinity, has been taken to the masses, and has enlightened them. The theism of the Theistic Church is no mystery to any class of men; as is proved by our Khasi Mission. It is natural and intuitive in all men, and specially in the unenlightened masses. Then again, who says that side by side with the presentation of the new faith no effort is to be made to educate these classes? My word is—preach to them and educate them.

In order to take our theism to the masses, four things are needed; (1) definite teachings in the shape of well-defined doctrines and tangible rituals and ceremonies; (2) active ministry, in the shape of preachers, who will love them and live amongst them; (3) popular modes of preaching, like the *kathakata* of

Bengal or the *kirtan* of Bombay, or the *kalakshepam* or *Harikatha* of the Southern Presidency; (4) institutions for spreading the light of education and culture amongst them. All these must be simultaneously worked together, and I have not the slightest doubt that if the system is persistently and vigorously carried on, sure success will reward our exertions.

However, I cannot close this part of the discussion without calling upon my fellow-theists of India to shake off their lethargy with regard to this part of their work. It is a matter of gladness and thankfulness to Providence that signs are already visible that the attention of the members of the Theistic Church is being directed to this neglected part of their duty. Besides the Khasi Mission, Depressed Classes Missions have been started in Bombay, Mangalore, Southern Malabar, in some districts near Calcutta and in Eastern Bengal, where energetic workers are already in the field, and a message of hope is being delivered to the untouchable, degraded, and despised people who have lived as social outcasts for centuries. May the All-merciful Father strengthen us for this great duty,—this is my humble prayer.

Recapitulation.

Let me sum up by recapitulating some of the leading features of this theism of ours, which I have put

forward in the foregoing pages. In the first place, a prominent feature of our faith is its *universality*. It stands on the common element in all religions, and therefore has a word of sympathy for all. It is not merely an eclecticism of an arbitrary character, generated by a false pride of liberality, but it is an intellectual and spiritual attitude, born of a conviction of the universality of religion.

The second great feature is its *spirituality*. In point of spirituality it turns to the East and to the Rishis of India, who have taught us to hold living and loving communion with the Indwelling Presence, and it also teaches the practice of contemplation and meditation as an effective means of promoting that communion. In this respect it is essentially Hindu.

The third feature is its *sociality*. It is not the anti-socialism of Vedantism, which teaches man to look upon life with all its relations as a bondage and a snare, but teaches that those relations are Divine ordinations for the education and perfection of man. It looks upon the human home as a sacred institution, and the position of woman in it as sacred and important. From its sociality arises another important feature, namely *morality*. It makes morality an essential part of its spirituality. It looks upon purity of mind and conduct as necessary conditions of loving communion with the Supreme. Besides, the elevation of society

being within the range of its aims and purposes, the promotion of morality comes legitimately as a part of its mission. In this respect it is rather Western.

The fourth is an important feature, namely, its *independence.* We believe in Divine Revelation; we believe that man, by reason of his spiritual endowment, can rise to the contemplation of the Supreme Being and can establish direct spiritual relationship with Him, and as a result of that communion can receive spiritual and moral revelations from the Supreme. At such moments spiritual and moral truths may intuitively and instinctively come within the range of his spiritual vision and he can become a seer. Truths similarly revealed by the seers and sages of all lands have been treasured up in the scriptures of all races. Accordingly, we honour all scriptures, but yet do not believe in infallible authority. We know that Divine truth has been mixed up with human error in the sayings of all teachers, and we try to sift them with the aid of the Divine light within us. Human independence in this matter is sacred and inalienable. So the character of our faith is essentially free. There is harmony between reverence and freedom, conservation and progress.

The fifth feature is its *immediacy.* As every morning the earth looks directly to the sun and in that direct looking are its life, its energy, its beauty, and its fruitfulness, so in direct loving communion of the

soul with the Supreme lie its life and light. I again repeat, what the water is to the fish, what the air is to the bird, that is the light of the Divine Presence to the soul. It truly lives, moves, and has its being in Him. And that the human soul may be able so to move, it has been spiritually endowed with the power of loving communion. We see no place for mediation in that great act of soul-communion with the Supreme. Rabaia, a Mahomedan female saint, when taken to task for not mentioning her Prophet in her prayers, wisely and truly said that her conduct was due to her forgetting her Prophet altogether when in the presence of the Almighty. The doctrine of mediation has done one great moral and spiritual harm. It has thrown up a screen as it were between man and God, and has taught men and women to give to man the thanks that are due to the Almighty, and has forged chains of bondage, that have bound down human thought to the errors of individual thinkers.

The last and perhaps the greatest feature of modern theism is its *catholicity*. It arises directly from its naturalness and its universality. We believe there is no monopoly in religious truth. Of course in the course of historical development, some races have shown special aptitudes for certain elements of human character. Such difference was due to various natural causes. To repeat an illustration given before, the Hindus, who lived in a mild and equable climate,

and were comparatively free from struggles with Nature for subsistence, and who were surrounded by stupendous mountains, and large rivers, extensive fields, naturally became contemplative. And their contemplation led them into deep researches into the spirit, and they became possessors of mines of spiritual wisdom, and became accustomed to see God in the soul. The Greeks, who lived in the midst of natural beauty and had a light heart in their struggle for existence, naturally came to regard God as the supremely beautiful. To them virtue was *beautiful* conduct and vice was another name for *ugliness* in life. The Jews, who had a chequered history, who were wanderers over the earth, always feeling the bitterness of foreign dominion, and always aspiring for a return to their favoured land, naturally attached great importance to the facts of history, and naturally regarded their leaders, who promised to lead them to deliverance, as Divinely appointed, and viewed them as rescuers and libefators.

Thus, every nation developed its spiritual instincts according to its inheritance and its environment. Along with the universal element of faith there came to be mixed up many local and peculiarly national beliefs. We, who keep our eyes on the universal in religion, are more sympathetic towards what is good in all, and can more truly honour the spiritually good and great in every land. We often pass by their

local prejudices and peculiarities, their erroneous notions and doctrines, and fix our eyes upon the lessons of love of God and man that they bear witness to in their lives. Thus, we can neglect for the purposes of our spiritual edification the purely Jewish ideas of Jesus, his apparent belief in a place called heaven, his belief in hell, his belief in eternal punishment, his idea of salvation for the Jews, his faith in the last day of judgment and so forth, and admire him for that passionate love which impelled him to ask his followers to love God "with all their hearts, with all their minds and with all their strength;" and also for that longing to save the sinful and the lost which is fore-shadowed in the beautiful parable of the good shepherd who left ninety-nine sheep on the way and went in search for the lost one.

Similiarly, there are many things in Mahomet which pertain to the passions and prejudices of a rough Arabian thinker. We pass them by, and admire that spirit of trust which made him exclaim—"Despair not of the mercy of God; for none despaireth of God's mercy except the unbelieving people." We, who sat at the feet of Devendranath and Keshub Chandra and received many a practical lesson of love and trust, can truly admire that spirit of love and trust in all the great teachers of mankind. Thus is our faith catholic in its spirit. We look upon all sectarian bigotry and narrowness as untheistic and irreligious.

In conclusion, I have only to restate my ideal of the probable future of the Theistic Church as spreading itself over the world. There will be endless differences in the names and designations of the churches or congregations. It will be called Brahmo Samaj in one part of India, the Prarthana Samaj in another, the Mukti Samaj in a third and so forth. The forms of service and ritual, and of domestic and social ceremonies will also be widely different, each body sticking, in that respect, to its national and traditional inheritance. The modes of propagation will also be different. It will be in Bengal, for instance, by *kathakata*, *nagar-kirtan* and such other national modes; in Bombay the *kirtan* system will always have the preference; in the Southern Presidency *kalakshepam* and *Harikatha* may be largely used. In foreign countries widely different methods of popular preaching may be used. But each and all of these bodies will agree in the universal aspects of the faith, in loving communion with the Supreme, in the abjuration of idolatry, in sociality and morality, in spiritual independence, in freedom from the errors of incarnation and mediation and in the spirit of true catholicity. Thus the universal and the national will be combined in our faith and practice. In special reverences and preferences also, there will be widely varying attitudes. The theists of India will naturally look up to the Rishis mainly as sources of inspiration; the theistic

congregations of the West will naturally draw their spiritual sustenance mostly from the life and teachings of Jesus; whereas theistic bodies brought up under the influence of Islam will naturally turn for their spiritual edification chiefly to the Arabian Prophet. Thus will all the modern faiths, divested of their peculiarly sectarian narrowness, come and mingle in a mighty confluence which in essential features will be natural and universal theism. That is the goal towards which we are pushing on. May the Divine Father lead us to that grand and glorious future! this is our humble prayer.